"Pat" Crowe, Aviator and Friend of All the World

By W. B. McCORMICK.

WHEN a man is called by every one who knows him out of his name "not in disrespect but in affection" it is only natural that curiosity should be aroused as to the cause of this rebaptism. But after reading the letters Lieut. James Richard Crowe, U. S. A., wrote to his friends from England and France, and which have been brought together and edited by W. B. Chase, it is perfectly easy to understand why every one who knew him before he went to the war, and to his death on the field of honor, called him "Pat" Crowe—aside from the circumstance that the original Pat Crowe was a person covered with disrepute.

There is a genial quality about that Hibernian diminutive which obviously fitted Crowe's nature. He was a man with a strong affection for his friends, a deep seated love and admiration for his family and for his home; he took a profound delight in cookery and the graces of eating; he had an eye for architecture and domestic interiors; his devotion to music went down into the well springs of his soul, and he loved people and the open road.

One may not have had the good fortune to know the man in life and yet may learn all this about him in reading the letters that make up the volume called *Pat Crowe, Aviator.* Surely it is the most unmilitary "war book" that has come to

JAMES RICHARD CROWE
(PAT CROWE)

us as the result of the events in France between 1914 and 1918. "Pat" Crowe went into the Air Service of the United States Army in 1917 as he did everything else in life—gallantly, wholeheartedly, cheerfully.

Son of a Confederate officer, soldiering seemed to come naturally to him, but before 1917 he had been a reporter on a Memphis paper and afterward assistant dramatic editor of THE SUN, later going to a position with the National Bank of Commerce. He enlisted in the army early in 1917, was commissioned Second Lieutenant at Tours in July, 1918, and met his death by falling with his airplane upon the field of Issoudun on September 29 of the same year.

"Pat" Crowe Gives "Jacqueline" A Barrow Ride At Chateau l'Aubiere.

Between his arrival in England and his death he wrote the letters printed to his mother, his friends and to a few papers where they attracted considerable attention, even amid the great mass of war correspondence from Europe. Except for the letters in which he described his course of training as a flier Crowe paid little attention to military affairs. And when he did allude to such things he reveals himself as the cheerfullest soldier in all France. He had no complaints to make of the weather, his quarters, the manner in which the army was run, his food or his equipment. In fact he grows almost dithyrambic at times over his army meals and his equipment, and the "grousing" of the average soldier was a thing apart from his life.

He had known France as a tourist, and he went back to it as a man goes back to a country which he loves. He made friends with the people and shared their meals. He tramped over French roads whenever he had a day's leave and set down some charming impressions of the lovely scenery in the chateau country. His charm of manner made him a welcome visitor in the homes of people who owned and lived in these chateaux. And one finds him noting how some flowers in one drawing room "matched the purple curtains." But amid such social distractions, including the delightful episode with "Jacqueline of the Chateau," he did not miss the distinctive types among his comrades, as the reader will note in his clever and amusing sketches of Oakey, the big sergeant; M'sieur Bates, the collector of rare and strange things, who figures as the leading man of the tale, entitled *The Hell in Helmet,* and the inventor in *S'long, Sliderule.*

Allusion has been made here to Crowe's admiration for good cookery, for domestic architecture and for music. He gives us a noteworthy glimpse of the two first named tastes in a description of a meal he ate in the kitchen of an old French mill:

"I was invited into the great kitchen of the house, whose chief glory is a fireplace of monstrous proportions in which were the brightest andirons I have ever seen. Madame had them from her mother, who had them from her mother, and so on back to the Middle Ages. There is a fine beamed ceiling, and the flickering firelight was reflected from burnished pots and pans. The French women are good housekeepers, you may be sure. The secret I am coming to is the open fire. They cook over an open fire in a fashion which I regret to say is almost extinct in America.

"I watched Madame cook the entire meal before me. Between times, she set a table in the same room—here the kitchen rises to its highest function as the centre of the life of the family—putting on snowy linen and shining silver and glass, all the while carrying on all the duties of a hostess in conversation. The splendid meal consisted of a bread and onion soup, a fine salmon trout, an *omelette aux fines herbes,* a roast, a salad and a dessert of goat cheese, nuts and jelly. We passed around a great loaf of war bread and each cut off a chunk as required."

If there be pernickety souls who think that passage too material, here is one showing his deep love of music, that is asthetic enough to suit the most precious taste. Crowe had chanced upon an ancient cloister and was seized with the idea of filling it once again with "light and life and color and music." So with his army comrade Mishka, a Czecho-Slovak, he worked for several weeks arranging a concert to be given in the place all draped with the flags of the Allies, the music and singing furnished by Mishka's compatriots in the French army.

It rained on the day of the concert, and musicians and singers had to sit under the cloisters. He writes:

"They sang their own anthem. . . . The falling rain played a solemn obbligato to their hymn. A violinist played something I had never heard before, but the sobbing violin held even the rough soldiers breathless, so that the dripping eaves made the only other sound. I would not wait for the finish, but ran away because I wanted to preserve the impression—the pleading notes of the violin, the silvery bell like sound of the drops of water, the white wall glowing with warm light which flowed out into the dark courtyard, and the faint outlines of the spire almost lost in the mist."

On this impression we, too, run away, carrying with us a memory of a gallant, tender, lovable and beloved soul, whose spirit dwells over the field in France and here in the hearts of his friends.

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